NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM - THE CANADIAN UNIVERSITY: MANPOWER & CANDIANIZATION

OPENING ADDRESS BY HENRY BEISSEL

Loyola College, Friday May 14, 1971.

When it comes to the rising number of non-Canadian faculty at our universities, and their growing influence on and in our education, it is not difficult to find general agreement, among the more and even the less informed, that a problem does exist. But when it comes to locating the problem, a mysterious and seemingly insurmountable obstacle appears -- namely that, while the problem exists, it does not exist anywhere in particular. That seems to be the one point on which university administrators from coast to coast are generally agreed upon: that on their particular campus at any rate the problem does not exist. It is a case of multiple sclerosis, an elusive disease of the central nervous system that paralyzes this or that extremity at one time, and at another deprives the patient of his eyesight or his sense of balance, but it cannot be located anywhere in particular. Curiously, at the same rate as the patient becomes inevitably and totally paralyzed, he grows more euphoric about his condition and about the Institution for the Incurable to which he is confined. It might be said that the current de-Canadianization of our society is producing similar symptoms on our campuses, and if this is so, the least that this Symposium can do is to destroy any delusions that what is happening to us in the academic community is the dawning of a new age of salvation and perfection ushered in by the pilgrim scholars and the excellence they are said to bestow upon us.

There is no need to pretend that those of us who were actively engaged in organizing this conference, and most of you who have come to participate in it, are not convinced already, on the basis of the abundant available evidence, that the growing preponderance of non-Canadian faculty has created a serious situation threatening, and in some cases definitely perverting, the Canadian character of our universities, and that this situation exists in one way or another at all Canadian campuses. That is no longer the issue for us. The issue is to assess precisely the seriousness of the situation, to describe and collate the symptoms of the disease that has struck this country. In doing this we are carrying on the work of numerous other

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conferences, teach-in's, and inquiries, as well as the work of many dedicated individuals, and we are trying to integrate it in a national context. The aim is to arrive at an accurate diagnose and, hopefully, to suggest -- or, if necessary, to demand remedial action.

I do not wish to anticipate what kind of remedies this Symposium might propose, but whatever it is, one thing is certain -- the practical application of any remedy we might propose is going to be at least as difficult as the prescription itself: in fact, in view of the preponderance of non Canadian faculty and their already extensive vested interests, plus the woolly-headed delusions of our so-called 'liberal' or 'continentalist' Canadian colleagues, effective action is going to require not only our efforts but also vigorous and organized pressure on the part of the students; and it will require, considering our administrators' commitments to the status quo, the active, and perhaps even legislative, cooperation of the various appropriate government departments and ministries. It is one of the functions of this conference to mobilize all the remedial forces in the community.

As an example of what I fear may be typical of official administrative attitudes on our campuses, I am going to quote to you from the letter I received from the President of Mount Allison University in response to my invitation to attend our Symposium and to give us the benefit of his views on the question of Canadianization:

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> "~~I am writing in response to your circular letter of March 15, 1971.~~ I am concerned about the assumption that underlies that letter, and particularly the document that accompanied it:"National Committee for Canadianization of Canadian Universities". I quite realize that what you call "Americanization" is a problem in some Canadian universities and particularly in certain departments in these universities. It is not, however, a problem here, nor so far as I know, is it a problem in the Atlantic universities. The generalization that Canadian universities are being Americanized is unwarranted.
> I am particularly concerned about the resolution which was passed by your general meeting on January 17, 1971, and which you seek to have adopted at individual campuses across the country. I doubt if such extreme action could be justified even at the most highly "Americanized" of all universities: it certainly couldn't be justified at most Canadian universities. I agree that a problem exists and that action should be taken; but it should be selective action, not indiscriminate over-reaction."

This is an almost archetypally bureaucratic response; it may even be archetypally, and self-destructively, Canadian, particularly in view of the fact that a check at one of the Atlantic universities, Dalhousie, turned up one

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particular department, for instance, which boasts 3 Canadians in a staff of 25. Nor did we use the term "Americanization" in connection with this Symposium. The invitation made it clear that we recognize that the problem of Canadianization presents itself in different terms in different departments, on different campuses, in different parts of the country. But most remarkable of all, surely, is President Cragg's description of the January NCCCU resolution calling for a moratorium on the hiring of non-Canadian faculty as "indiscriminate over-reaction" - this at a time when the latest Department of Manpower and Immigration figures suggest that of the 3,087 faculty we hired in 1969, -- 2,398 - or 77% - were non-Canadian citizens, an increase of 10% over 1968. At that rate we shall be hiring non-Canadians only in 1972. We lament the absence of the Mount Allison president because it deprives us of a better understanding of ~~what~~ exactly what "selective action" in his view we should take to meet this situation.

The official response from Quebec universities to our invitations has been essentially the same, only it is couched, in this letter from L'assistant du Recteur of the Université Laval, in that deep-frozen language of Napoleonic bureaucracy that is the hallmark of French administration the world over. He writes,

> "Tout en vous remerciant de votre invitation, je dois vous dire que notre Conseil exécutif, auquel cette demande a été soumise, n'a pas cru devoir y donner suite."

It is true that for the entire Laval faculty the figure of non-Canadian staff is 23.4%, but in Science, psychology and philosophy, for instance, it rises sharply to 40% and above. And just under half the non-Canadian faculty is French from France. So the problem exists; only it has a different face, and it is difficult to imagine that an exchange of one form of colonization for another is a way of satisfying the needs and aspirations of the people of Quebec.

But Laval and Mount Allison, at least, had the courtesy to reply. They were two of a total of eight -- eight replies in response to 123 personal invitations I sent in mid-March to the presidents of 123 Canadian universities and colleges! For the record I would like to name the other six: UBC, University of Manitoba, the Royal Military College at Kingston, Université du Québec a Trois-Riviére, the University of New Brunswick, and U of Prince Edward Island. None of them are officially represented here, though their reasons differ: the President of U of Manitoba informs us, for example,

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that 64.7% of his staff is Canadian and leaves it at that. As for the silent majority of 115, we can only speculate why they would opt for the impropriety of not even acknowledging our invitation. Where the presidents are citizens of the U.S., that may not be too difficult. Others may be immobilized trying to ride their administrative horse in all directions at once.

But there may be many who feel that nationalism cannot be reconciled with their dignity, that academic life should be above parochial nationalist concerns and considerations, indeed that objectivity is of the very essence of scholarship and research and university teaching. This implies old and deeply ingrained fallacies and we need not flatter ourselves that we can eradicate them today or tomorrow. But I would like to open this Symposium with a few brief remarks which may help clarify what we mean by nationalism and how & why it is relevant to our universities.

It is fashionable among intellectuals, parrotting McLuhan's epitome of the 'global village', to avow that nationalism is passé, a 19th-century phenomenon taken seriously only by reactionaries. Villagers being notoriously well informed about the realities in each others' houses and lives, if our intellectuals really lived in a 'global village' they would, instead of championing ill-informed pseudo-avantgardisms, realize that we have only just entered the age of nationalism, but a new kind of nationalism. What they describe as 'nationalism' and as belonging to the 19th century, is in reality imperialism -- a chauvinist megalomania bent on territorial and commercial expansion, usually accompanied by delusions of messianic grandeur. Soviet Russia and the United States, each in her own way, are perhaps the most prominent last bastions of that kind of chauvinism, still powerful enough alas, but in the process of being eclipsed because historically passé.

If 19th century imperialist nationalism is passing, it is because of the emergence of a new kind of nationalist, one who does not seek to occupy other countries but who occupies himself with the affairs of his own country, one who does not scheme & contrive to take over foreign industries and to manipulate the economy of other nations but who insists on controlling his own economy and working out the destiny of his own people, one who is not obsessed with his own superiority and determined to impose his way and

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philosophy of life on others but who knows with his heart and with his head that his own nation is different and unique, like other nations, neither better nor worse, and who struggles to make that uniqueness manifest culturally, politically, economically, socially, without ever losing sight of his solidarity with all men. This new spirit of nationalism is in evidence in all parts of the world today, wherever there is a community of people with a distinctive history, language, tradition, faith. It has arisen as a protest not only against the paternalism or even downright colonialism of the super-powers and their imitators, but also, and more crucially, against the technological forces which today threaten to homogenize all civilization. The new nationalism is a projection of the individual's demand to the right to be himself, and as such it is an important and healthy counter-force to ruthless globalism, and it may be the only way to prevent the world from dehumanizing itself à la Orwell's 1984. Inter-nationalism, after all, can exist meaningfully only inter nationes, i.e. among nations who associate freely, as equals, and with mutual respect.

Internally, in Canada, Québec separatism is one of the manifestations of this new nationalism. On this issue historical currents have left us with one choice only: either a confederation, freely entered into by English-Canada on one side and Québec on the other, a partnership of equals, -- or an autonomous Québec Republic. It is the determination English-Canadians show in being themselves that will decisively influence the outcome of this issue.

Externally, it is inevitable, given our special geographic and historical circumstances, that the new nationalism should be defensive against the U.S. which now owns 66% of our total economy and thus effectively controls our political and cultural life. This has nothing to with whether we like or dislike the American way of life: to a considerable extent we are all involved in it. The question is simply whether or not, for better or worse, we wish to be ourselves, Canadians, a nation intent on bringing to fruition its own distinctive character and sensibilities, thus to enrich the life and history of the family of nations. If we do, we must tackle the problem on all fronts -- in the whole economy, the media, trade unions and textbooks, our water and energy resources, in the universities.

If my argument on the new nationalism stands, and if we do decide to be Canadians, then it is easy to see that our institutions of learning

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and our professional training centres are paramount in trans itting our own values, perspectives and commitments, and that a predominance of teachers and students with Canadian citizenship is essential. The shameful neglect of Canadian literature right across the country is a good example of what happens when our English departments are allowed to be dominated by U.S. and U.K. professors. Generations of them have taught us that our own literature cannot match the excellence of the great and immortal British and U.S. literatures and have so intimidated us that we dare not contradict an argument that is so patently false. If we were to teach only what is 'great and immortal', at least half of British, and certainly three quarters of U.S.literature would have to be discarded, and we would teach Dostoevsky in place of Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Mann instead of Evelyn Waugh. Perhaps that is what we should be doing. But I don't think so. Part of the function of any national literature is to help the community from which it arises understand itself, by articulating its innermost drives, impulses, frustrations, by projecting the reality of its conduct and its conflicts, by probing the dimensions of its quest, shaping its underlying myth. In the process of thus examining and objectifying the social psyche, literature gives meaning and direction to the life and times of the community as a whole. Canadian literature does that for Canadians and that is why it should be taught at Canadian schools and universities, without apologies, as a matter of course.

At least as important as Canadian content are Canadian values and perspectives. Because the assumption of universal objectivity on the part of academics is just so much humbug. It is true we have agreed to find certain rules of logic useful, and in the natural sciences there are methods of research whose practical results have given them international validity. But even the sciences are subject to national perspectives, for they do not function in a vacuum. The areas and objects of particular research projects, for instance, are often directly and intricately related to the society which finances them; so are the applications of particular scientific discoveries. Neither the ballistic missile, nor napalm, nor the art of brain-washing were developed in Canada, not because we are a more moral nation than the Germans or the Russians or the U.S.ians, but because we do not posses the same kind of aggressive and militant temperament of which they are a product.

I am not suggesting that taking out Canadian citizenship will change a man's temperament. But if it represents a serious commitment to the country it will change his perspectives. And perspectives are important, less important perhaps in the natural sciences, but crucial in the arts where so much is subjective. Take history, for example. Since the past cannot be totally reconstructed (not that it would make much difference if it could be), you start with bits and pieces say of a particular period. If it is fairly recent history and your material has not already been rigorously and quite randomly decimated by chance, you must make your own selection from a mass of available material. That selection can only be guided by your own personal bias which, however educated and refined, remains bias. Then you interpret the pieces you have chosen as evidence, i.e. you put them together like a jigsaw puzzle. But they were not pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, and if they fit it is because you have made them fit a picture you created from your values and perspectives and commitments, and these likely existed in your mind before you ever started your research. Essentially they were the product of your education, your environment, your home.

I am not suggesting that because of this, historical research and the teaching of history are worthless. Quite on the contrary: everything depends precisely on what kind of jigsaw puzzle we choose to make of the bits and pieces of our world, because by that pattern we shall live, love, think, suffer, and die. Everything is only what it is in totality, and any analysis or interpretation of it is less than the whole and therefore dependent upon choice and selection which, in turn, are determined by values, perspectives, biases. This is true whether you deal with a historical period, a literary work, a social situation, or the human condition itself. Their interpertation and analysis are always subjective. Therein, precisely, lies the importance of the humanities: the implication, namely, that it is up to us to create order and meaning in the world as we see fit. And this fitness is the measure both of your individual and your national identity. This is why national perspectives and commitments are crucial to the study and teaching of the Humanities.

The argument presupposes of course that there really are significant differences between the values and assumptions north and south of the 49th parallel. Those living to the south and crossing to the north of it often

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find no real difference, whereas those living to the north and crossing to the south of it, usually do -- and that is a significant enough difference in itself, however one explains it. It goes well with the idea of divine appointment which informs U.S. politics and life, its naive notion of the goodness of natural man, the dream of creating between California and New York State the City of God where all mankind will be redeemed. We Canadians do not hold such grandiose convictions. We are the product not of a revolution but of two emigrations, one from the motherland, the other from below the 49th parallel. We do not believe in the perfectibility of man, and life is for us an Odyssey rather than a quest for the Holy Grail. This difference is fundamental and informs every facet of our cultural, political, and social existence. It makes us more conservative and more unadventurous than our southern neighbour, less sure of ourselves and more dull perhaps and slow, but also more level-headed, more obstinate, and in our own smug way more humble. There is much debate and disagreement about 'the Canadian identity'. As far as I am concerned we have our identity, a changing and developing one as becomes a nation that is alive, but unless we commit ourselves consciously to what we are, to our own strengths and weaknesses, our own limitations and possibilities, we shall become, not Americans, but nobodies.

This Symposium is part of our determination to be Canadians.

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